

**Sura Yusuf, Verse 94-95**

وَلَمَّا فَصَلَتِ الْعِيرُ قَالَ أَبُوهُمْ إِنِّي لَأَجِدُ رِيحَ يُوسُفَ لَوْلَا أَن تَفِنْدُونَ

And when the caravan had departed their father said: Most surely I can sense the smell of Yusuf, although you may think I am foolish

قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ إِنَّكَ لَفِي ضَلَالِكَ الْقَدِيمِ

They said: By Allah, you are still in your old state of error.

**Reflections**

- how could the father smell the scent of Yusuf?
- Nabi Yaqub has not given up hope after all this time? What does this say about his relationship with God? About his love for Yusuf?
- why is he afraid to say what he says? But he still says it anyways.
- what is the attitude of the listeners? Why is there no respect for an old man, or compassion for a grieving father?

**Tafsir**

The brothers of Nabi Yusuf left Egypt with the shirt he had given them. They were happy and excited. They looked forward to telling their father that Yusuf was still alive and they would take him to Egypt. In the house of Nabi Yaqub (in Palestine or Kanaan) however the mood was still sad and gloomy. But just when the caravan left Egypt Nabi Yaqub somehow had a feeling that Nabi Yusuf was found. He was so far away but he said he could actually smell the fragrance of his son. He knows that his family who were with him would think him silly and consider him a foolish old man. But he still tells them what he feels. He told them he felt their sad days were over and that their household would now have happy days ahead with the whole family united.

History tells us that Nabi Yaqub had his sons' families with him at that time; their wives and children. They were quick to reject what he was saying and were firm in their belief that it was his foolishness that made him expect his son back. It had been so long since Yusuf had disappeared, probably died. How was it possible to smell him from a distance away? They dismissed it as the rantings of an old man whose love and grief for his son had made his mind unstable. They told him to stop imagining things and get back to reality.

Note that the word ضَالٌّ in verse 95 refers to being mistaken and being astray, not in belief but in thinking on a particular matter.

The words spoken to Nabi Yaqub show a lot of disrespect and lack of love and understanding. They were unaware of the purity of the heart of Nabi Yaqub and his status with God. They thought of him according to their own dark thoughts and hardened hearts. That is the mistake many people do in their relationships. They consider others to be like themselves, not allowing for superiority of thought and wisdom in the other person. Even if the person is really mistaken, it is wrong to speak to someone like that, especially an older person, a father/grandfather of the family. Islam emphasizes that old people must be treated very respectfully. There is a lot to learn from their wisdom and experience. Although they may not have modern knowledge they are a treasure house of old and valuable knowledge. They have seen much which the younger generations can learn from.

It is possible that the scent of Yusuf mentioned in these verses is not an actual fragrance but the coming of news about Yusuf. This news was traveling from Egypt and would reach the home of Nabi Yaqub. It was a telepathic message relayed to Nabi Yaqub through his senses due to the high level of his faith and his hope in Allah. Those who are very close to someone can sense something about them even if they are far away.

Nabi Yusuf had never lost hope. After all these years had passed he does not think it strange to be expecting to see Yusuf again. One who believes in God believes that all things are possible for Him and it is easy for Him to change things around. Hope lives forever in such a heart.

### **Hadith**

1) One of the ways of respecting the Almighty is to respect an elderly believer.

Holy Prophet (s)

Al Kafi, Vol.2, pg 165

The Prophet (s) also said;

The presence of an old person among you is the source of an increase of the grace of the Lord and the spreading of His blessings.

Nahj al Fasaha, H#1110

2) People are the enemies of what they do not know.

Imam Ali (a)

[The family rejected what Nabi Yaqub was saying because they did not know the truth of the matter. Imagine their surprise when they found out].

3) Whoever does not hope for anything from people and relies on Allah for all his affairs, Almighty Allah will answer him in all things.

Imam Sajjad (a)

Al Kafi, Vol.2, pg 148

### **Important Lessons**

- 1) Pure people can sense things which other people cannot.
- 2) When we can't see what someone sees it does not always mean they are wrong. We could be wrong.
- 3) Do not be harsh with someone who you think is not sensible.
- 4) Treat an old person with a lot of respect.
- 5) Life of a pure and learned person is very difficult when he is surrounded by people who cannot understand him.
- 6) Never give up hope in Allah.

### **Possible Ideas for activities**

- act out the scene of Nabi Yaqub with his family. How did Nabi Yaqub feel?
- divide the children into groups. Let one person be an old man in the group. The others react to what he says. Discuss how the old person felt when others reacted positively/negatively to what he said. How can the children be more understanding and show respect to the elders in their families and communities.
- another activity to emphasize respect for the elderly would be for each child to give define an older person positively. Share stories about grandparents. Check out Islamic fiction on grandparents (Our Grandma by Zaynab Dawood . . .)
- Ask each child to define hope. See: <http://www.kidstalkaboutgod.org/BibleLessons/DevotionalBibleLessons/tabid/648/ID/164/What-Is-Hope.aspx>

### **Sources:**

Āytaullāh Nāsir Makārim Shirāzī (ed), *Tafsīr-e Namūneh*;  
Aghae Muhsin Qaraati, *Tafsire Nur*